1: Metraux E-5 (1934-1935) 1940
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

tion that members of a family are always ready to give each other. Relatives are inclined to exchange presents chiefly among themselves, but there is a constant giving and receiving among all of the people of the village of Hanga-roa.

THE LIFE CYCLE

Birth

Children are always welcomed into a family and the rapid increase of the Easter Island population in the last fifty years indicates the fertility of most of the married couples. There are now 216 children under 13 years of age. I never heard of a woman who was annoyed at the prospect of having a child or of a woman who had an abortion. The desire for children is illustrated by the following popular Easter Island tale, which was given to me as an actual recent incident:

> A woman named Rere-ao slept with her husband but saw that she would never have a child. One day she noticed a woman who was pregnant. She pretended to be pregnant too. She also pretended to suffer when the pregnant woman felt the first pains of labor. The other woman gave birth to a child. Rere-ao said to the midwives, "You stay here. I must go out to defecate." She went to the house of the woman to whom the child had been born. She said, "Give me this child. I want to suckle it." The woman passed the child to her and she stole it. She put it in front between her tapa skirt and her waist. Then she returned to her house and said to the women sitting there, "Hurry and take my child." They came to deliver the child and it was born from the front part of her bosom. The real parents looked for their child who had been stolen by Rere-ao. They came to the house of Rere-ao and said, "The child is ours. Why did you steal him?" Then they said to the people, "She only pretended to have a child and for that reason she has taken our child. She is Rere-ao, stealer of the child." The parents took their child back, and thereafter the people made fun of Rere-ao and called her Rere-ao-toki-poki (Rere-ao-the-stealer-of-the-child).

The present islanders do not care whether they have sons or daughters. Formerly sons were preferred, as in many parts of Polynesia. "The son has to carry on the line, succeed to the title and inherit the estate" (31, p. 37). Father Zumbohm (230, vol. 6, p. 131) writes:

> . . . If the newborn child was a boy, there was great rejoicing, but if it was a daughter there was less enthusiasm. All of the affection of the family was bestowed upon the first born son, whereas the last one was despised; he bore a nickname that nobody pronounced without laughing.

Pregnancy

At the third or fifth month of pregnancy, but never in the fourth or later than the fifth month, the husband's father offered an earth oven to the parents of the expectant mother. This oven was called *umu takapu moa kokoma* (*takapu*, ceremonial earth oven; *moa kokoma*, intestines of the fowls) and was "proportioned to the number of sweet potatoes or fowls they had at their disposal" (230, vol. 6, p. 130). The food cooked in it was presented with the words, "Umu takapu moa ka kai" (Eat the earth oven of fowl's intestines), and eaten on the spot. The name of this feast was *rae* (the first fruits, the

1: Metraux E-5 (1934-1935) 1940
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

726 The clans were always led to battle by the chief, but there was no particular formation. Every man acted in accordance with his individual fancy, or as occasion demanded,
727 relying upon skill and strength. . . . The slaughter on the field of battle was never very great, but in the event of a general defeat, the vanquished party was pursued by the victors to the hiding places, their habitations destroyed, females captured, children and infirm persons brutally murdered. The defenseless unfortunates who fell victims to their merciless captors, accepted their fate, whether it was slavery, torture, or butchery, with remarkable fortitude, seldom if ever making any show of resistance.

These wars between tribes or lineages are always presented in legends according to the same pattern:

The western tribes attacked the eastern or vice versa. When one party felt that it was overwhelmed and that victory (*ao*) was with their adversaries, the warriors fled and tried to take refuge in caves (*he opo ki roto ki te ana, he pipiko*) or on the rocks or islets off the coast. The old men, the women, and the children scattered and hid in caves or in deserted places. Those who had a powerful relative among the victors put themselves under his protection. These refugees were called *pakiroki*.

727 The victorious warriors promptly invaded enemy territory, looking for the hidden people. Those who were discovered were slaughtered or taken as slaves. Sometimes the women and girls were spared and given as wives to young unmarried warriors (87, p. 31). Guards were set on the coast to prevent refugees on the islets from renewing their attacks or from getting food. They had to live on seaweed (*auke*) and on fish. Most fortunate were those who could find *poporo* berries (*Solanum nigrum*).

[266 If among the dead enemies there was a man of high rank, the victors not only ate
●578] him, but burned his skull. This was considered the greatest of insults.

721 War for the modern Easter Islanders belongs to a far distant past and they know no more about it than is contained in the legends. (See pp. 363-389.) The fights with visiting Europeans were so brief that no observations of ethnological value could be made. Little material on warfare is given in missionary accounts, though a series of wars broke out in 1863 and 1864, provoked by disputes over land belonging to natives kidnapped by the Peruvians (p. 43). Zumbohm (230, vol. 5, p. 663) says: "When the crops were to be distributed there arose quarrels which degenerated into wars, the consequences of which were looting, devastation and famine." These wars were stopped by the missionaries but were renewed under the influence of Dutroux-Bornier (p. 45).

CANNIBALISM

266 Victoria Rapahango told me that when she was a small girl she had known the last *kai-tangata* (cannibal) of the island. All the children were much afraid of him. No native on the island denied that his ancestors were cannibals. Some laughed at it; others resented any allusion to such a savage custom. Most of the islanders lost their self-consciousness about cannibalism after hearing of some instances of it in Europe. Roussel (190, p. 463) writes that cannibalism was abandoned only after the introduction of Christianity. Before that natives had eaten some white men, including two Peruvian slavers. Cannibalistic meals were eaten by warriors in a secluded spot, and women and

1: Metraux E-5 (1934-1935) 1940
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

children were rarely admitted to such feasts. Zumbohm (230, vol. 6, p. 241) was told by natives that the fingers and toes were the most palatable bits.

Cannibalism was closely associated with war; the victors feasted on the corpses of the defeated and killed prisoners to be eaten. Geiseler (87, p. 30) says that "when they had many captives, they shut them in huts erected for that purpose in front of the stone idols. They were kept there until a great feast was celebrated for the victory and food consumed in abundance. On occasion of these feasts the victims were killed in honor of the gods." Legends tell of grown persons and children who were slaughtered during peace time by warriors craving human flesh. (See 215, p. 427; 230, vol. 6, p. 241.) These acts were deeply resented by the relatives of the victims who took cruel revenge for the crime, which was considered a terrible insult to the family.

Traditional history frequently alludes to cannibalism. The long war between the Tuu and Hotu-iti districts was indirectly caused by two men who craved human flesh (p. 74). When Tuu was victorious and the Hotu-iti people were crowded on Marotiri, the victorious party organized regular raids to kill them. The corpses were taken back in canoes and distributed among the warriors to be eaten. A quarrel about a corpse precipitated the final defeat of the Tuu district. The Hotu-iti men besieged in the caves celebrated their victory by eating some of the enemies they had slain in their successful attack. Other tales show that some individuals did not hesitate to commit murder to satisfy their appetites.

AGRICULTURE AND COOKING

GROUND CULTIVATION

It is difficult to estimate the extent of cultivated ground in ancient times. Certainly the peninsula of Poike was as desolate in pre-European times as it is today, with the possible exception of the land near the three hills where some water was available. The interior of the island was apparently always sparsely inhabited. Evidences of ancient agriculture in the form of enclosures of varying sizes are found scattered over the island, generally near old ahus. According to natives, some of these enclosures were built after European contact to protect the crops from voracious sheep and goats. This statement must be true for material from ancient monuments has been used in their construction. The extent of ground so protected is not great, but if one considers the number of enclosures and the fact that many were built when the population was decreasing, it is evident that the natives took an interest in the cultivation of the soil which must not be underestimated.

Knoche, who paid some attention to the agriculture of Easter Island seems to have had a poor opinion of the native plantations of his time (1912). He

11 Metraux E-5 (1934-1935) 1940
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

Hau hurukuru were small crowns of variegated feathers from the cock's neck, principally the red (*kura*) feathers. These were worn by warriors in time of war. Such feathers fluttered and gave "a very warlike appearance to the warriors when they ran or danced." Similar circlets, of a smaller size, were worn by boys and girls as adornment for the dance (87, p. 35).

Hau peu-teu-ki were headdresses "of long, black, green, and variegated feathers worn by dancing people" (215, p. 535).

The *hau tara* was a "small headdress of trimmed feathers ornamented by long tail feathers behind; used by chiefs on occasion of ceremony" (215, p. 535).

The *hau vero*[10] was made of long cock feathers and was "used in dancing and formerly at marriage feasts."

The *hau pinei* had short black feathers.

The *hau koiro* had long, straight, projecting feathers, and was the insignia of the leading dancers.

The *hau teatea* (white headdress) was made from the feathers of white cocks which are said to have appeared on the island in the time of King Rokoroko-hetau.

The *hau veri* is supposed to have been the headdress of the king.

Teketeke was the name given to the short, trimmed feathers of a circlet, as opposed to the long, projecting feathers in front. When a man was enraged against another or wanted to avenge himself for some grave injury he turned his headdress and wore the short trimmed feathers in front. The circlets of short black feathers were also called *hau teketeke*.

Diadem

An Easter Island diadem (fig. 23, *a*) acquired by the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania (18053) in 1891, is constructed on the same fundamental principle as the circlets described above, though it presents several new features:

This diadem consists of two parallel rows of feathers extending vertically from a circular band made of the leaf sheath of the banana. The feathers are said to be those of the frigate bird, but they are probably cock hackles. The inside row is composed of pairs of feathers tied in bundles and inserted into the wrapping of a coil made like that shown in figure 24. This coil with feathers is attached to the upper rim of the banana leaf-sheath band. The outer row is composed of pairs of feathers tied together with a tapa strip and fastened to the upper part of the leaf-sheath band by a continuous thread which makes half hitches around each bunch of feathers and transversely wraps the entire band.

Crescents

In the collection of the Museum für Völkerkunde, Vienna there is a crescentic, feather eyeshade (fig. 25, *a*) similar to one in Thomson's collection (215, p. 535, pl. 54, fig. 1; see also Cook, 53, vol. 1, p. 290).

This type of headdress (fig. 25, *a*) consists of three superimposed coils, identical to those in the feather circlets. The upper and the lower of these coils bear feathers, attached as in the circlets but at the front and sides only. These feathers extend beyond the frame for 96 mm. in front and for 43 mm. at the sides. The back of the frame is without feathers and is wrapped by a narrow strip of paper mulberry bast. The two layers of feathers are held together by six rows of black, 2-ply thread, evenly spaced and running parallel to the curve of the foundation coils. In each row three threads

[10] Brown (27, p. 169) describes the *hau vaero* as "a hat for the dances, made of the tail feathers of the white *tavake* . . . though the king never fought he generally wore a feather-hat called *veri* just before a battle." Tepano, who was Brown's informant, never mentioned such a headdress to me.

1: Metraux E-5 (1934-1935) 1940
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

415 berry fiber running over the edge and through the doubled up border. The short ends are sewn together with continuous horizontal stitches across a band of paper mulberry bast 8 mm. wide which completely encircles the container. Some containers have two compartments and a small container has only one.

Other Headdresses

291 I was told that formerly the women occasionally wore on their heads pieces of tapa cloth, stained with turmeric; these were called *pouo roiroi*.

[578 765] A special circlet (*vanavana*) was worn by men "in delivering a challenge to combat for revenge" (215, p. 535). Geiseler (87, p. 28) mentions that the revengeful mourner (*timo-ika*) covered his head with "a rough crown made of horsehair" (Mus. für Völkerkunde, Berlin, VI.4977) about which his catalog gives the following information: "Headdress of horsehair to look like a woman. Name: *ivive*. This wig is used when a man calls secretly on a woman in order not to be noticed. These objects are rare and these were the only specimens."

301 114 According to Tepano, men and women of the past often wore a sort of "comb" (*harihari*) in their hair. In this ornament, feathers were tied to small sticks with strips of paper mulberry, banana, or *hau* bark. Since no specimen of this kind of comb has been preserved and since none of the early or recent voyagers to Easter Island mention it, the truth of Tepano's statement may be doubted.

Women's Hats

291 Until the middle of the nineteenth century the women wore a special kind of hat (*hau pouo*), which is described by G. Forster (83, vol. 1, p. 566): [285] "The women wore a great wide cap, made of very neat mat-work; it was pointed forwards, formed a ridge along the top, and two large lobes behind on each side, which we found extremely cooling for the head." No specimen of these hats for women has been preserved. However, they have been figured by Cook (53, vol. 1, p. 290) and La Pérouse (130, pl. 11). Such hats are [532] carved on the heads of two images of women in Bishop Museum. These images are not very ancient, but were certainly made when these headdresses were still in use. The two lobes are larger on the back than on the front and are raised on both ends. The general form of the hat is elliptical and was worn lengthwise. From Cook's plate we may infer that these hats were made of small plaited strips sewn together like modern straw hats of European type.

Headdresses of Unusual Type

The Peabody Museum at Cambridge has two Easter Island headdresses which represent types that are neither mentioned in the literature nor remem-

1: Metraux E-5 (1934-1935) 1940
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

design (fig. 43). Of the two skulls I collected, one bears the figure of a dance paddle (*ao*), the other that of a bird very like the one engraved on the skull reproduced by Routledge. In 1912, Knoche (123, pp. 214-215, fig. 73, *f*) obtained three magic skulls which were similarly marked. The designs are described as follows:

> The three designs are on the foreheads of the skulls and have probably been incised with a sharp piece of obsidian. One of the figures shows a simple system of lines. It is placed exactly above the supra-orbital of the right side and ends on the left side. There are three pairs of lines, and one of them is perpendicular to the others. The pairs are combined in a curious way so that they produce two rectangular triangles. The second design has the form of circles. The lower periphery is almost parallel with the glabella. The third figure is the best incised and is on the oldest of the three specimens. On the left side of the frontal bone there are four isosceles triangles with parallel sides which cross each other on the summits. The right side of the fourth triangle is lacking. The summit is on the glabella. The base of the triangle is slanting to the left socket.

Present-day natives still believe in the power of the skulls and are reluctant to part with them. They say that the skulls of the *ariki-paka* (noblemen) were stolen from the ahus. Relatives of the dead whose skulls had been stolen felt the insult deeply and sometimes resorted to war to avenge such injuries. This information is invalidated by the tradition concerning the skull obtained by Routledge (194, p. 240). It was the skull of Hotu who made it an heirloom because "it was extremely good for chickens" and he did not wish it to go out of the family. His son gave it to a relative whose son was an old man, and from him Routledge bought it. The incised skull which was sold to me by Tepano had been presented to him by the uncle of his wife.

This belief in the fertilizing power of *ariki* skulls is paralleled in other parts of Polynesia. In the Marquesas the skulls of chiefs were preserved separately and were brought out for certain public activities. Such skulls were taken on fishing expeditions to ensure a good catch and to protect the fishermen from sharks (104, p. 166). Maoris used to place the skull or bones of their ancestors in the sweet potato fields to procure a good harvest (20, vol. 1, p. 387).

DANCE ACCESSORIES

Dance Paddles

The two types of dance paddles were the *ao* which was large and the *rapa*, which was small. These paddles were held at the middle of the shaft by the dancer or chanter and were twirled very rapidly in the rhythm of the chant. The catalog of the Museum of the University of California contains an interesting statement about one of these paddles (1159): "It was used by chiefs in their war dances before the king. They were twirled and shaken in close proximity to his face as tho' to frighten him."

1: Metraux E-5 (1934-1935) 1940
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

754 tice of black magic has its counterpart in white magic in the *taku mo ora* (charm for life) which was performed by an old man to prolong some person's life. I was told that, according to the rules of sympathetic magic, the cock whose death provoked that of a man could be eaten by the sorcerer, but the desired effect would be postponed.

The usual way to exert a supernatural influence or to facilitate any activity was to pronounce a spell (*tarotaro*). A native, Charli Teao, gave a sentence which he claimed was a spell to make someone ill: "Ka oho, ka uru ki roto ki te kokoma manava—ka taviri, ka tavara" (May it go, enter the intestines, the bowels—he is staggering, he is falling). When asked what thing or person was to enter the victim, the informant said that the formula alluded to signs on the tablets. Every sign was supposedly endowed with magical power and a sort of independent existence which made possible the sending of one sign (*rona*) when need of it was felt. The animal or object represented by the sign acted according to the will of the enchanter. This statement must be accepted with great caution, as the man who made it is young and could not have known very much of the past. But it is not unlikely that the signs of the tablets were credited with supernatural virtue after the real significance of the tablets was forgotten. At any rate, the association of the symbols on the tablets with "devils" who have independent activities and personalities throws some light on the primitive conceptions regarding magic on Easter Island.

A curse pronounced by a priest was expected to have an immediate effect and consequently was greatly feared. Eyraud (81, vol. 38, p. 71) aroused violent feeling among the natives and was almost considered an evil sorcerer for having said to a chief, Torometi, "You shall die." As soon as these words were uttered, Torometi was struck as by lightning. He was seized with violent shaking and his features and gestures expressed anger and terror. The audience was greatly agitated and everyone shouted, "The Father said: E pohe oe!" The missionary had no intention of cursing him but only wanted to remind him that he was mortal and should fear another life in which he was
● [578] to pay for his sins. Natives resent as a deadly insult the expression *vai hakari* (body full of water) which they explained is the equivalent of a curse. It is applied only to people who have beautiful fields or are proficient in some activity. Such people are said to die young.

OMENS

787 Dreams occupy in the imagination of the present natives the same place as they had formerly. The islanders are convinced that most dreams are significant and that they foretell future events. When looking for antiquities, the natives attributed great importance to any hint that they obtained in their sleep. Most of their dreams at the end of the year are concerned with the

1: Metraux E-5 (1934-1935) 1940
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

of the English manager of the company which owns the island. At Mataveri the people who were to participate in the ceremony gathered for some time (Routledge says for a month) and spent their leisure time feasting and dancing. A big hut was built there, and great uprights were planted like columns in the ground. One of them is still standing, another has fallen which has one side carved like the back of a big image. Other such blocks and a huge basin stand in the Residence garden.

Feast of the Bird-man

The feast began in the austral spring (probably September or October), when *manu-tara* were nesting on Motu-nui. Only dominant, victorious tribes took part in the quest for the egg and the attendant ceremonies, for the privileges at stake were too important to be vested in an inferior or defeated group (*mata-kio*). The victorious warriors (*mata-toa*) who were entitled to live at Mataveri while awaiting the coming of the *manu-tara* were frequently referred to under the collective name of *ao* (*ka oho Mataveri ki te ao*; go to Mataveri to the dominant group), which means victory and consequently designates those who had obtained power over others through a successful military expedition. The word, in this sense, probably has no connection with the dance paddle, *ao*.

Routledge (194, p. 258) says that "only those belonging to the clan in the ascendancy for the time being could enter on the quest." That is, there was only one tribe who, for political reasons, had the privilege of performing the rites of the bird cult. The envied position was retained by this group for years, unless it yielded its rights to another friendly tribe. The jealousy provoked by this monopoly must have led to quarrels and even war. (See 194, p. 258.) However, it seems to me more likely that several powerful lineages participated in the egg race and the ceremonies. Roussel (190) clearly mentions a rivalry between several parties, and Routledge (194, p. 258) says that sometimes "clans" took part in the quest.

Routledge (194, p. 259) states that the preliminaries for the feast began almost a year before the discovery of the egg. She probably confused the time sequence and placed at the beginning activities at Mataveri which I believe occurred at the end of the feast. I was told that the feast began no earlier than January and perhaps even later. Possibly those attending the feast stopped at Mataveri on their way to Orongo. As my theory is supported only by my own reconstruction I will retain Routledge's scheme in the following description.

The people who were to take leading parts in the festivities left their villages to reside in Mataveri with their wives and children. There they lived in a big house or several houses, which were not destroyed until the second half of the nineteenth century. The long months of waiting were made joyous

Ii Metraux E-5 (1934-1935) 1940
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

root is used for burns, and a species of nightshade is used as a vulnerary remedy." Sea water is drunk as a purgative. The introduced verbena (*puringa*) is used as a remedy against leprosy. Knoche (123, p. 195) mentions a decoction of ti as a remedy but he does not say for what it is used and modern natives know nothing about its medicinal use. They rely mostly on European remedies.

RECREATION

FEASTS

Modern Easter Islanders rely entirely on feasts to break the monotony of their lives. Formerly, frequent wars gave a thrill to existence, and when peace reigned festivities were continuous, according to Eyraud. Every lineage or village considered it a duty to entertain in turn the other villages or lineages. As soon as a feast was finished in one place a new one began at another point of the island.

The general name for feast, used in tales, is *koro* which applies also to the big house erected for festal occasions. Whatever the real meaning of *koro* might have been, the feasts were named according to their purpose, their nature, and the time of the year when they were celebrated. The main feasts which have been recorded by missionaries or mentioned in traditions are the *paina*, the *are-auti*, the *tangata-manu* (feast of the bird-man) at Orongo, and the ordinary *koro*, including feasts to honor a parent and those given at harvest time by rich landowners. "When the crops were ripe, every plantation, whatever its products were became the subject of a feast for a village or even for several villages. Everything depended on its extension and the importance of the owner" (190, p. 428).

At every feast there was a great display of food, especially of chickens. Food was piled on stages or conical towers. It is said that feasts were often disturbed by quarrels among warriors (*mata-toa*), who demanded large contributions of food and fought for shares (190, p. 498).

PAINA

The exact purpose and form of the *paina* feast is rather vague. Various visitors have collected widely differing accounts. But the *paina* apparently celebrated the memory of a dead parent, generally a father, and was an indirect part of the funeral duties of a son. The feast could be held soon after the death or several years later. It was always celebrated in the summer, and the right time for it was indicated by the position of the three central stars in Orion. The entire family of the deceased, especially the brothers and cousins, contributed to the expense of the ceremony. Over a period of years they raised chickens, planted extensively, and probably stored food to

1: Metraux E-5 (1934-1935) 1940
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

rongorongo men were arranged in rows, with an alley-way down the center to the Ariki. Some of them had brought with them one tablet only; others as many as four. The old ones read in turn, or sometimes two together, from the places where they stood, but their tablets were not inspected. Te Haha and his comrades stood on the outskirts, and he and one other lad held *maru* in their hands. If a young man failed, he was called up and his errors pointed out; but if an old man did not read well, Nga-ara would beckon to Te Haha, who would go up to the man and take him out by the ear. Our informant repeated this part of the story identically months later, and added that the Ariki would say to the culprit, "Are you not ashamed to be taken out by a child?" the offender's hat was taken away, but the tablet was not inspected.

The entire morning was spent in hearing one half of the men read; there was an interval at midday for a meal, after which the remainder recited, the whole performance lasting till evening. Fights occasionally ensued from people scoffing at those who failed. Nga-ara would then call Te Haha's attention to it, and the boy would go up to the offenders with the *maru* in his hand and look at them, when they would stop and there would be no more noise. When the function was over, the Ariki stood on a platform borne by eight men and addressed the *rongorongo* men on their duties, and doing well, and gave them each a chicken. Another old man, Jotefa, gave a different account of the great assembly, by which the Ariki sat on his stoop and the old men stood before him and prayed; according to this version they either did not bring their tablets or their doing so was voluntary. In addition to the great day, there were minor assemblies at new moon, or the last quarter of the moon, when the *rongorongo* men came to Anakena. The Ariki walked up and down reading the tablets, while the old men stood in a body and looked on.

In conformance with his supervisory duties Nga-ara is said to have traveled round the island and to have stayed for some while with the experts in each district. Routledge (194, p. 246) heard of a man of the south coast who was considered to be "too big a man to have a school." He also went about visiting and inspecting schools.

Tradition states that when Nga-ara died his body was carried to the ahu on three tablets, followed by the *rongorongo* men. The tablets were buried with him.

The *tangata rongorongo* of Easter Island are better understood when compared with those of the Marquesas and of Mangareva. In the Marquesas the *tuhuna o'ono* was "master chanter, tribal bard, or ceremonial priest, who presided in all important ritual, and served as repository and teacher of sacred and traditional lore" (104, p. 145). He was also the teacher of sacred chants and director of chanting at family feasts. The word *o'ono* is the equivalent of *rongo* since in the Marquesan dialect the *r* is dropped and the nasal velar (*ng*) becomes *n*. In the Marquesas there were tests of the *tuhuna o'ono* by other members of the same profession and contests between *tuhuna o'ono* of different tribes (104, p. 229). Any *tuhuna* who was judged in error by a majority of the masters gathered was immediately deprived of his title and could never lay claim to it again.

On Mangareva also there was a class of chanters or "intellectuals" who were termed *rongorongo* (*taura rongorongo*). They were not priests, properly speaking, but were responsible for the sacred chants for important

13: Routledge E-5 (1914-1915) 1917
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

the Marama clan set fire to the house of the head of the Miru clan because the Miru had given the coveted distinction to the Ngaure instead of to his own people. An aggrieved clan had its remedy through war.[1] The Mata-toa when taking part in the bird ceremonies are spoken of as the "Ao," thus "Miru te Ao" signifies that the Miru were the celebrants that year; the same name is given to an actual object in the shape of a large paddle used in dancing, the handle of which was adorned with a human face. The island is triangular in shape, with its apex to the north, and the bird ceremonies were especially connected with the western angle. This portion is formed by an extinct volcano known as Rano Kao, and in October the Mata-toa, or a certain number of them, men, women and children, took up their abode in a number of houses at the foot of the mountain on the landward side. The place is called Mataveri and the removal there was known as "Kaho Mataveri ki te Ao," or "to go to Mataveri for the Ao." The houses were made after the fashion of the island, as a superstructure of sticks and reed on a boat-shaped foundation of stone, and here great cannibal feasts were held; tradition relates that so big were the houses that one of the victims escaped by hiding in an extreme end. Similar gruesome feasts took place to the accompaniment of breaking waves in a sea cave near at hand, which still bears the name of "Ana-kai-tangata," or "Cave eat man"; the roof is covered with paintings of birds in red and white pigment, one of which is superimposed on a drawing of a European ship and cannot, therefore, be earlier than the eighteenth century. For

[1] Since writing the above Dr. Corney has located the interesting accounts of the first missionaries, published in *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*. Their knowledge of the Bird cult is vague, but they were specially impressed with the tumult which resulted between different parties after the finding of the egg in the month of September. It must be remembered that their acquaintance with the island was subsequent to the disorganization caused by the Peruvian raid.

14: Routledge E-5 (1914-1915) 1917
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

the reasons for our visit) we called at his house, only to find from the present ecclesiastical authorities that on his death his Easter Island collection had been dispersed and lost.

No form of writing is known in the South Seas, and various unsatisfactory attempts have been made to decipher the signs. Here again no hope was given to us in England that it would be possible at this date to recover the art, and we found that with these as with other articles of scientific interest, the natives had too long been aware of the value of everything old to leave much chance of obtaining objects of value. Every known place had been ransacked for such things to sell to passing ships. One old man indeed was reported to have five tablets hidden in a cave, of which when he last visited it two—if I remember rightly—were found to have rotted away. We approached him with every inducement, moral and material, only to be met with a blank denial that he had any such possessions. Whether he lied or not will never be known, for he died shortly afterwards, and as is always the case in these circumstances his hoard was lost.

The pursuit of the hieroglyphics was a tantalizing one. The old people could all remember the time when they were a living part of their civilization, and had known intimately those who could make and interpret them; but even to touch them was "tabu" to the uninitiated, and with the death of the last professors, many of whom were carried away by the Peruvians, the knowledge of them expired. One old man is still alive who had begun to learn the art, but his hand had shaken so that he had given up the attempt. In most of the more important villages there had been a house set apart for their manufacture, where no women entered. Here the professors taught their pupils. They practised first on the outside stem or bark of the banana, and then were promoted to write on wood with a shark's tooth.

The tablets were of all sizes, some as much as 6 feet long, and as far as was known their contents varied; some were said to be prayers, and some a record of names. It was possible to secure a certain set of words, which was universally said to be those inscribed on the oldest and most important tablet. The natives who recited it had as much or rather as little knowledge of the meaning of the doggerel as we should have if asked to interpret some of the more mysterious of our nursery rhymes. Authority over the tablets rested in old days with the head of that section of the people known as the "Miru."

The islanders were divided into ten clans who were constantly at war, but no one of them had a chief or ariki save the Miru clan, which inhabited the northern coast. The Miru as a whole possessed certain supernatural powers. Skulls have been brought from Easter Island marked with designs whose significance was unknown. These belonged to members of the Miru clan, and as such had the invaluable property of making hens lay eggs. They were carefully set apart in consequence.

15;Routledge E-5 (1914-1915) 1919
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

on his death to Maurata. When Maurata went to Peru, Také, a relative of Te Haha, obtained them, and Salmon asked Te Haha to get hold of them for him. Také, however, unfortunately owed Te Haha a grudge, because when Te Haha was in Salmon's service, and consequently well off, he did not give him as many presents as his relative thought should have been forthcoming, and he consequently refused to surrender them. They were hidden in a cave whose general locality was surmised, but Také died without making known the exact site, and they could never be found. Kaimokoi's tablets were burnt in war. 212 463 [518]

The question remains what were the subjects with which the tablets dealt, and in what manner did they record them? Various attempts have been made to deal with a problem which will probably never be wholly solved. Twice before our own day native assistance has been sought to decipher them. It will be remembered that the existence of these glyphs was first reported by the missionaries; but even at that time, when volunteers were asked for who could translate them, none came forward, Bishop Jaussen, Vicaire Apostolique of Tahiti, managed to find in that island a native of Easter among those brought there to work on the Brander plantations, who was supposed to understand them, and who read them after the boustrophedon method. From the information given by him, the Bishop was satisfied that the signs represented different things, such as sun, stars, the ariki, and so forth, and has given a list of the figures and their equivalent. At the same time he held that each one was only a peg on which to hang much longer matter which was committed to memory. The other attempt to obtain a translation was that of Paymaster Thomson, of U.S.S. *Mohican*, in 1886. There was then living an old man, Ure-vae-iko by name, who was said to be the last to understand the form of writing; he declined to assist in deciphering them on the ground that his religious teachers had said it would imperil his soul. Photographs, however, were shown, and, by the aid of stimulants, he was induced to give a version of their meaning, the words of which were taken down by Salmon. It was, however, remarked that when the photographs were changed, the words proceeded just the same. 212 114 124 [211]

Inquiries were made by the Expedition about this old man, and it was agreed by the islanders that he had never possessed